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Title:

Speech at Cheesman, Doley 50th anniversary dinner

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Mr. Neighbour, The Chief Justice of South Australia, My Lord Mayor, My Ministerial and Parliamentary Colleagues, Directors of Cheesman Doley Neighbour and Raffin, and especially, of course, to Jack Cheesman and Maurice Doley, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen :

A 50th birthday is a significant event - I speak with some feeling because in a month or so I will be having my own - but for a company such as Cheesman Doley Neighbour and Raffin, which has so greatly influenced not only Adelaide but many other Australian cities, it is a very special occasion.

Fifty years is a good time to pause and look back at what has been achieved and then, bearing in mind our own fallibility, try to hazard a guess at what will happen in the next half century.

Most of us take time for this far more frequently than each 50 years - politics being what it is we sometimes have to take stock every 50 minutes - but an occasion such as tonight gives a spur to take stock and provides a fixed time span.

Cheesman Doley celebrated their 50th year in Adelaide in most fitting style, with the opening of the Grenfell Centre, for which they were the architects in association with Hannaford Pellew and Hodgkison.

The Grenfell Centre is Adelaide's first commercial plaza development and is an impressive addition to the city's streetscape.

It is also a pointer to the changes which are taking place in community expectations of cities, of housing and of architectural design generally.

In 1925, the year before George Lawson founded your firm in Adelaide, Australia's first tall slab building, Leonard House, was erected in Melbourne to a design by Walter Burley Griffin. It was the predecessor of the high rise office block and, until a few years ago, its successors were virtually unchanged in concept. The practice was to build tall buildings, use as much of the site as legally possible and not really consider the consequences for the city, for the people who worked in and around the buildings or for the immediate streetscape.

That has changed as architects and planners have realised that their work cannot be viewed in isolation from the economic and social development of the city, be it the central business district or the suburbs. The impact of individual buildings, be they the suburban bungalow or city commercial or retail centre, on the surrounding environment is now a major concern of the community.

Buildings can no longer be designed on the basis of solely maximising returns, nor can older buildings with historic, cultural or other community functions be knocked down indiscriminately.

We expect major developments now to work towards a multi-functional role, with office buildings being designed to add to the city in ways other than the number of employees accommodated. Shopping arcades, small theatres, medical services, galleries and so on can all be designed in a large development so that it enhances its environment rather than just being part of it.

The same critical outlook is evident in housing developments, with local communities wanting new developments to be a living part of the neighbourhood and not to be designed and constructed with little thought as to how the overall area will work.

The Great Australian Ugliness which the late Robin Boyd described so well has not disappeared, but an urban awareness has been created and that awareness is shared by people from all economic and social groups.

Concern for the urban environment is not the preserve of the middle class professionals - families in every suburb of Australian cities are thinking about what is happening to their street, their district, their city. They want cities to be human, and to be responsive to community feeling.

The extent of that feeling and the growing preparedness of individuals to articulate it very strongly presents government and the architectural and planning professions with a considerable challenge.

If we are going to be even partially successful in meeting that challenge government and the professions will have to be prepared to question their own methods and assumptions and pose alternatives which are neither traditional nor self-interested.

In the next 50 years, Cheesman Doley Neighbour and Raffin, along with the rest of the community, will be working in a society which will experience a far quicker rate of change than has occurred in the past 50 years.

That may seem a manageable, even enjoyable, prospect to us individually, but if you consider the changes which have occurred since 1926 they are very great. If we try to extrapolate a similar rate of change for the next 50 years, I would suggest very few of us could do it, and even fewer could hazard a guess at what would be the results of a faster rate of change.

In 1926, the main buildings constructed in Adelaide were the Adelaide Teachers College, the Adelaide Technical College, both in Kintore Avenue, the Bice Building at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and the Edmonds Building on the corner of Gawler Place and what is now the Rundle Street Mall. (Very few people in 1926 would have envisaged the mall).

They are very different in concept, design, materials and capacity to the new buildings of 1976 such as Norwich Union at North Adelaide, the new Education Building in Victoria Square or the Monarto Commission Building on Greenhill Road.

The extent of the differences gives us an indication of the way our own thinking will alter.

One important area in which those concerned with planning and design will have to adapt to new circumstances is in our understanding of the factors which influence a city's growth and nature.

Planning is not only concerned with where buildings will go and what they will look like.

A city's development cannot be regarded as simply an exercise in putting new buildings in whatever spaces we can find, and making sure that the new does not physically or visually clash with the old.

The shape of the city, the rate of its growth, the direction in which it grows are all conditioned primarily by social and economic forces. The physical results we look at and say: "This is Adelaide, or Sydney or wherever", are very much the products of those forces.

This means that planning must take on a role of co-ordinating those social and economic forces as well as concerning itself with the physical aspects of design and construction.

The physical aspects are very important of course, and the work of planners and architects are visible in the city's appearance and we must still, as a community, encourage innovation and flexibility in design so that the city is human and people can relate to it.

But the impact of forces such as shorter working hours, greater white collar employment at the expense of blue collar jobs, increasingly sophisticated leisure facilities, mass ownership of motor vehicles to the extent where a two car family is now a suburban norm, and the rising level of real disposable income have affected the shape of our cities more than the physical planners of 50 years ago.

The social and economic changes of the next 50 years will have similarly marked results, but the fundamental difference is that our cities have now grown to the point where we cannot just accept those changes and plan around them simply or compensate in our planning for their effects.

If we do that we will have totally unmanageable cities, and I do not want that to happen in Adelaide. We can learn by the experiences of the cities on the Eastern seaboard and overseas.

To ensure that Adelaide in 2026 is just as pleasant and liveable city as Adelaide 1976, Government planners and architects will have to develop, individually and jointly, good monitoring systems and good information collection processes.

We will have to get sensitive economic, social, cultural and technical listening posts to ensure that we can meet change as it occurs and not take so long to identify problems that the policies we evolve are no longer appropriate because the conditions have changed yet again.

The English historian R.H. Tawney in his book *The Radical Tradition* advanced the thesis in relation to foreign policies of nations that the radical thinkers of any period in history eventually have their policies adopted, perhaps 20 or 30 years later. But by the time they have been accepted by the governing establishments, they are no longer of any use because the world situation has moved on.

The same is true of many other fields, and it is especially true in a nation as inherently conservative as Australia.

Australia cannot allow itself the luxury of tardiness, particularly in its planning efforts. We must work out planning systems which are effective in meeting both community expectations and the forces which change our cities.

I don't believe we should change simply for the sake of change, but we must recognise that our planning procedures need to alter and they must have to be quite unorthodox.

The temptation is always to stick with the known ways, the established procedures and only to tinker with them when they are shown to be acutely lacking. It requires great skill and patience (and I don't use that as a synonym for procrastination), to take the lead, but I am sure that in Adelaide we have the Governmental and professional skills to take that lead.

Adelaide has produced brilliant architects and planners and we have an architectural heritage which is unique. I feel we can add to that in a way which will not diminish it.

Cheesman Doley, Neighbour and Raffin has added greatly to this city, and I'm sure the firm's founders in 1926 could not have predicted the Adelaide of today.

I don't want to start looking into the future (I leave that to tidal wave specialists) but I hope that Adelaide in 50 years time will be a city very little bigger than it is now and close to the thriving and equally comfortable city of Monarto.

I would suggest that both cities will have, I hope, a higher material and cultural standard of living, and they will have greater opportunity to take part in the decisions affecting their society.

This will come about through an imaginative partnership between Government, the professions, local government and community groups.

My Government is ready to play its part in this partnership.